

JON RAPPOPORT INTERVIEWS THOMAS JEFFERSON

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Scholar Clay Jenkinson, who has portrayed, with stunning accuracy, Thomas Jefferson, in venues all over the world, assumes the identity once more, for a sit-down interview with Jon Rappoport, Pulitzer-nominated reporter.

The interview is in MP3 audio format. See, "Thomas Jefferson interview.mp3".

Clay Jenkinson is the director of the Dakota Institute and the founder of the Theodore Roosevelt Center. A humanities scholar, he is the host of the nationally syndicated radio show, The Thomas Jefferson Hour. (www.jeffersonhour.org)

"Mr. Jefferson," in character, answers Jon's questions about life in 2011, from his 18th-century perspective.

"I wish we had three hours," Jon stated, "but we'll squeeze in everything we can in one hour."

What is Jefferson's view of where America has gone in two centuries? Is it still a Republic? Should it be? How can a Constitution designed to fit fewer than three million citizens apply to a population of 300 million? Do even the rights and powers of individual states make sense, when one state, California, has 37 million residents? What about the national health-care plan? The state of public education? Mega-corporate influence? Two political parties with common agendas? The military-industrial complex? The Federal Reserve? Invasive surveillance?

The questions pile up.

Comments by Jon:

I have seen Clay on C-SPAN, debating with "Alexander Hamilton," and I can tell you Clay is phenomenal. Not just good. Great.

When I wrote my Logic and Analysis Course for home schoolers, I discovered that Jefferson was a devoted student of logic. He went to college to study it. It was one of his pillars. So I hope to touch on that in the conversation.

Of course, there are so MANY questions I want to ask him. Impossible to get them all in. One hour is good, eight hours would be better.

For example, Jefferson once remarked rather casually, in a letter, that the federal government should run foreign affairs and policy, and the states should handle everything else. In 2011, I fell off my chair. Apparently, this is way he pretty much viewed the distribution of powers as laid out in the Constitution.

I have to believe that Jefferson, looking at the massive USA these days, would want radical decentralization. What form would it take?

Again, Clay isn't just an actor playing Jefferson. He's a scholar, and he's explored Jefferson's life and ideas up one side and down the other.

Comments by Jon after interviewing Thomas Jefferson:

To say I was surprised by Mr. Jefferson's remarks would be a vast understatement. I nearly fell off the chair several times. But listen to it yourself to get the full impact.

What follows are my thoughts in the aftermath...

This nation of 330,000,000 people can't operate on the strict principles of the Constitution. It isn't operating on them now, and it won't later. The whole notion of limited government and powerful states was created when the total population of the states was perhaps 5 million people. It was created FOR a small agrarian nation. It was created FOR a piece of the Eastern seaboard.

So what do we have now? I believe the answer is: federal government as a quasi-religion. That's what we have, whether we know it or not. George Bush, Barack Obama, pick your Pope. To be more accurate, pick your religious PR front man. Choose from among the cliches they spout, the homilies they bring to the table, the phony sentiments they express in order to boost their base, their devoted base.

It's all about sentiment. Which church do you want to attend? Which sermon do you want to hear? Which feelings or revulsions do you want to be stirred in your psyche?

Because these men certainly aren't about government, in the sense in which it was intended after the American Revolution. They are/were sitting on top of an immense structure which is a grotesque parody.

Of course, if you're deeply into the religious aspect of this, you won't be able to glimpse what I'm referring to. You'll be too busy praying at an altar.

It's a con.

It's a fake.

It's an hallucination.

It's designed to look real.

Only a person in the middle of a hallucination would think that the size and reach of the present federal government is useful, apt, successful, proper, or correct.

If the concept of a Jeffersonian Republic has any validity—government that is close to the people and reflective of its wishes—then by comparison we’re cooked. Hell, we’ve been cooked many times, refried and boiled and baked and broiled, over and over again.

If you don’t care about government that’s close to the people and their wishes, then you’re fine. You can relax in the Jacuzzi of the 2-party system and dream about the devil and God and who’s good and who’s bad. You can call one president God and the other the devil. It’s a horse race and you can place your bets and cheer and boo. You can ooze religious righteousness from every pore.

Now, as for the Constitution, I would refer you to the recent articles of three writers:

Gary North, Lucifer Geraldo, and Kirkpatrick Sale.

The three pieces, respectively:

“The US Constitution: Tool of Centralization and Debt”; “The US Constitution is a Trojan Horse!”; “Getting Back to the Real Constitution? Fahgettaboudit!”

The sites:

LewRockwell.com; InfoWarsToday.com; Vermont Commons (VTCommons.org).

My takeaway and inferences from the articles and the Jefferson interview: the Constitution contained several fatal flaws: the Commerce Clause and the Supremacy Clause. The wording of each was sufficiently vague to allow the Congress, the Judiciary, and the president to move in and expand the national government, from the beginning. To expand the national government at the expense of the states.

This must have been quite shocking to the states, because, in the run-up to the writing and drafting of the Constitution, the states expected they would remain powerful and independent entities, with a federal government that would, for the most part, only run foreign policy. The states were shocked, but not entirely surprised.

The one man who was definitely not surprised was Alexander Hamilton. He was the architect of what turned out to be the America we know today. He, as Mr. Jefferson stated in my interview, took people to “the dark side.”

Now, I’m not a Hamilton scholar, so I don’t make this statement as the final word on him, but I certainly lean in the direction of concluding that it was his influence that projected America as a powerful national aggressive empire-building force. Jefferson was opposed to that vision.

The Constitution turned a newly formed loose confederation of independent states (republics, really) into a trampling ground for the federal machine, because it left open key doors of interpretation on vital matters.

For example, under the Commerce Clause, the national government was given the power to regulate trade between states. But this was merely supposed to mean the states would be held back from charging each other protective tariffs on shipped goods, and if there was a trade dispute between states that couldn't be worked out, the national government would step in and mediate a resolution. In time, this evolved into massive federal power to interfere in state matters of all kinds, including the sale of pink or yellow or green condoms between midnight and 3 in the morning in Duluth.

And the vague wording in the Commerce Clause was the key. The courts and the Congress and the president could twist meanings and come to a new distorted concept of federal power.

What about the opening line of the Constitution? WE THE PEOPLE. As Mr. Sale points out, what's THAT doing there? It should have been WE THE STATES. "The people" is as vague as it gets. It implies you're talking about everybody, as if suddenly all people are cut loose from their states. It grinds a heel in the faces of the states. Remember, it was the states (legislatures) that ratified the Constitution.

So...to return now to the Constitution as-is, as a means of saving the nation, is asking for a flawed beginning, again.

And then we have this: the Bill of Rights. The whole manner of its inclusion suggests that government is the primary force, and the people are exempted from that force on specific counts—when, in fact, those enumerated Rights come FIRST. They were always there, even if nations for centuries denied them.

The Bill of Rights should have been called: THE WAY THINGS ARE NATURALLY, AND DON'T FORGET IT, BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER WE CREATE A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT IS THE AFTERTHOUGHT, THE RIGHTS ARE OUT FRONT IN THE PARADE.

In the interview, Mr. Jefferson told me each generation should write its own Constitution. That was what he wanted. That is what he hoped for. To make that work, I believe you need small Republics. Today, who knows how many you would need on this continent. A hundred? Two hundred? California has 37 million people, seven times more than all the new states combined, after the Revolution.

Hamilton was the man who wanted a strong central government and a national bank that would complicate money to the point where the average person couldn't understand it anymore...and therefore, those men who did understand it well could manipulate it for their own extreme benefit. The aristocratic class. Some of the same men bought up debt incurred for the purpose of fighting the Revolutionary War—and then leaned on the taxpayers to repay the debt later with stronger better money. Buy the debt with hinky paper first; demand repayment with solid silver later.

Well, we don't have 200 independent Republics on this continent, and therefore a new Constitutional Convention (to cover 300 million people) isn't going to cut it, if we want real individual freedom.

Since I started this site ten years ago, I've written about radical decentralization. Understanding what that could mean, figuring out what that could mean, inventing what that could mean...it's not just a casual reflection. It's the idea and the action that—if anything does—trumps the religion we now have called government.

Mass hallucination is a wondrous thing. It allows you to think you're doing A while you're doing B. You can invest devout and sacred hope in a PR front man called a president while you're in the voting booth. You can stand in a crowd and feel ecstasy or weep behind a barrier when the president comes to your town to wave his scepter and spray holy water on you, before he cruises his limo to a fund-raiser at a mansion. You can believe Jesus wore a white leisure suit and invested in oil wells while extolling the free market. You can look at the great capitol dome in Washington DC and fall to your knees and dream that the people inside are enacting the business of the Republic.

It works if you've got that fairy tale in your pocket.

What was it that Strother Martin said in *Cool Hand Luke*? "What we've got here is a failure to communicate."

Well, what we've got here is a failure of imagination. As in, NOT ENOUGH. Because when you think you're supporting a just government when you're really chomping on a cheesy religion, that's the ceiling on your imagination. You've reached as far as you can go. Every important-sounding pronouncement by your favorite president comes across as stars and angels drifting down from heaven. Whenever somebody's PR machine cranks out a political sentiment all dressed up in "towering feeling," you buy it as an elevation of government to the highest level. Which your imagination, held to a ridiculous minimum, tells you is religion.

Religion is a con. And so is the kind of government we have now. It's no surprise people confuse them. Run some old footage of a presidential convention. Look at the upturned faces in the crowd, in the audience. They just ate the body and drank the blood. They're radiant in the glow. The glow that floats political boats and turns hard-packed drivel into diamonds.

JON RAPPOPORT